



The Architecture Centre



BRISTOL OPENING DOORS – INDIVIDUAL BUILDING PROFILE

BUILDING: WHITEHALL PAVILLION

FACTFILE INFO BOX:

LOCATION	Johnsons Lane, Whitehall, BS5
DATES	1912-1913 designed and built.
ARCHITECT	Walter S. Paul and James
STYLE	Edwardian, with evidence of the Queen Anne revivalist style of the late C19th and early C20th.
LISTED STATUS	Has been put forward for inclusion in the Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest.
MATERIALS	Red brick walls with slate roof and timber cornicing and windows.
ORIGINAL FUNCTION	Provided sports and social facilities for workers from the local chocolate factory.
BUILDING TYPE	Sports pavilion and social club.
VISITOR ACCESS	By arrangement with the Old Georgians Social Club

LINKS

<http://oldgeorgians.webs.com/pavilionhistory.com>
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/brizzlebornandbred/6992379495/>
<http://brisray.com/bristol/bstgrg4.htm>
www.bristol.gov.uk/page/leisure-and-culture/records-and-archives

KEY POINTS: Formerly a grand Edwardian-style building but now much neglected.
1912/3 - Built as a sports and social facility for H.J.Packer & Co., chocolate manufacturers.

1914 Used by Belgian refugees fleeing the First World War
1916 Became the Bruce Cole Hospital to look after wounded soldiers from the War
1930's Sold to the Council
2006 Chocolate factory finally closes.

NARRATIVE:

The Pavilion was once an extremely handsome building. Its design reflected the Edwardians' interest in the architecture of the Queen Anne period with extensive use of red brick for walling and contrasting white timberwork to the windows, cornicing and the now lost balconies and small square turret to the top of the roof.

The building was designed by the lesser known Bristol based architectural practice of Walter S. Paul and James. They mainly specialised in domestic, shop and public house architecture but had previously designed a factory building and offices for Packers and the Lion and Cat House for Bristol Zoo.

Externally, the Pavilion once had a balcony running the full length of the first floor on its north side, facing the sports field. This was directly accessed from the grounds by a staircase. To the centre of the balcony were four pairs of huge classical columns supporting a cornice with railings above and a large clock to the centre. A dentilled cornice, a projecting moulding with a series of small blocks beneath, ran all the way round the building at roof level and up the raking sides of the gables. The corners of the building are picked out in darker, more heavily burnt bricks. The centre bay of both ends of the building at ground and first floor levels broke forward and was capped with a sweeping lead roof. The east end provided an entrance to the ground floor and internal staircase to the first floor and was set within classical columns with an entablature above. To the centre of the gables at either end of the roof was a round window with stone dressings and a plaque below surrounded by fruit and foliage. A small turret with timber lattice-work sides once stood in the centre of the apex of the roof; whether it once held a bell or aided the ventilation of the hall below is not known.

Internally, the ground floor provided spaces for changing rooms, toilets and other ancillary purposes. On the first floor was an impressive hall with a barrel-vaulted, decorated plaster ceiling with a stage to one end and access to one side onto the first floor balcony overlooking the sports field.

The Pavilion has a fascinating social history intimately connected with the local chocolate factory of H.J.Packer & Co.. In 1881 H.J.Packer left Fry's to set up his own business in Stapleton Road. Here he initially employed three people on 2s 6d per week using a gas stove and saucepans. The firm was taken over by Bruce Cole in 1886 and continued to flourish. In 1900-2 land was purchased in Greenbank and three factories built. The company went through difficult times in the depression of the 1930's, but as late as 1960 still employed 1100 people. Later it was to fall prey to a number of notorious "asset strippers" leading to its final closure in 2006.

Bruce Cole not only provided employment for his workers but also housing and sports and social facilities. The Bruce Cole Institute, as the Pavilion was once known, was built in 1912-3 on the edge of extensive playing fields. Workers could not only play football, hockey, cricket, bowls and tennis but also attend the gymnasium, have a game of billiards and enjoy the entertainment put on in the grand hall on the first floor. One former worker remembers "upstairs was a big hall with a stage for amateur dramatics, which was also used for dances. The band was on the stage, and there were two principal dance bands made up entirely of employees, one under the Craddy Brothers, and one under Bert Weaver". At one time, Gloucester County Cricket Club played their home matches on the sports field.

During the First World War the building was taken over, first to house refugees from Belgium, after the country was overrun by the Germans. Then from 1916, it was used as a hospital to accommodate the increasing number of wounded from the Front. A photograph from the time shows the main hall full of beds with red cross covers.

In the 1930's, as H.J.Packer & Co. went through hard times, the Pavilion and sports field were sold to the Council who still own them. Today the building is used by the Old Georgians Social Club for social events for the local community but it is in a very poor state of repair and deteriorating rapidly.